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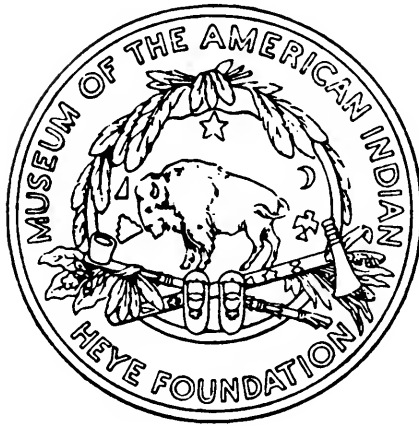
MUSEUM OF THE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



# INDIAN NOTES

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## *INDIAN NOTES*

### **FOREWORD**

During 1976 and 1977 the Trustees of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, conducted extensive discussions devoted to formulating an official policy to govern the Museum's collections, especially with regard to accessions and deaccessions and the necessary accompanying documentation. The resulting policy statement is herewith made available for donors and other friends of the Museum, for its Director, Staff, and Trustees, and for the museum and anthropological professions.

The statement was prepared by a sub-committee of the Board of Trustees consisting of John C. Ewers (chairman), Edmund C. Carpenter, William N. Fenton, and William C. Sturtevant. Revisions and suggestions were received from other Trustees and from the curators of the Museum. The final document was adopted by the entire Board of Trustees at its meeting on June 29, 1977.

The policy is believed to reflect (and improve upon) the best current policies and practices of anthropology museums. Among the sources consulted by the sub-committee were: the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, adopted by

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the General Conference of UNESCO in 1970; the recommendations regarding acquisitions and ethics adopted by the International Committee of Museums of Ethnography of the International Council of Museums in 1973; the Rules for the Acquisition of Art Objects announced by Harvard University in 1971; the Smithsonian Institution Policy on Museum Acquisitions issued in 1973 and the Collections Policy statement prepared in 1977 by the Smithsonian Department of Anthropology; and the Policy Statement on Accessions and Deaccessions published by the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, in 1976. The policy is consistent with *Museum Ethics*, the report of the Committee on Ethics of the American Association of Museums issued in 1978.

William C. Sturtevant  
*Trustee*

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## **Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation COLLECTIONS POLICIES**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

#### **A. Purposes of Document**

This document establishes policies for accessions to the collections of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation (hereinafter referred to as MAI-HF), delimits the circumstances and methods by which materials shall be deaccessioned from the MAI-HF's collections, establishes policies on outgoing and incoming loans of specimens, and states the principles governing access to the collections and records of the MAI-HF. The term "accession" includes gifts, purchases, exchanges, and any other transactions by which title to incoming material passes to MAI-HF; the term "deaccession" includes gifts, sales, exchanges, and any other transactions by which title to outgoing material is transferred from MAI-HF to another institution, as well as disposal by intentional destruction. Temporary physical transfers of material to or from the MAI-HF that do not involve a change in ownership are termed "loans". The Museum Shop and other units of MAI-HF may be governed by separate statements, no provisions of which shall be inconsistent with the present policy statement. Property totally unrelated to Native American history and culture is not covered by this statement. This statement:

1. States basic priorities for adding new materials to the collections;
2. Affirms that MAI-HF and its staff shall be in full compliance with laws and regulations, both domestic and foreign, governing the transfer of ownership of specimens and their movement across political boundaries;
3. Affirms that the highest ethical standards shall continue to be met by MAI-HF and its staff in all transactions;
4. Assures that the standards of documentation for specimens shall equal or exceed those current in other anthropological, historical, and art museums;

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5. Defines the conditions of acceptance that shall be placed upon materials to be accessioned or borrowed by MAI-HF; and
6. Defines the conditions and the procedures for permanent and temporary removal of specimens from the collections.

### **B. Background of Collections**

A major purpose of George G. Heye in establishing the MAI-HF was "to collect, acquire, by grant, gift, purchase, devise or bequest; to hold and dispose of, anthropological collections and objects of scientific or educational interest relating to the science or study of anthropology [of the Native peoples of the Americas]; to maintain and add to such collections."

Of basic importance to the development and preservation of these collections over the years has been and must continue to be their usefulness for scientific and educational purposes. The collections have provided and will provide basic source materials for anthropological and historical research, and for writing and illustrating scholarly and popular books, monographs, and articles which advance and disseminate knowledge, and as sources of artistic inspiration. To that end the collections must continue to be available to staff and to visiting scholars for study. They have provided and should continue to provide significant primary source materials for interpreting Indian and Eskimo cultures to the public through permanent and temporary exhibitions at the MAI-HF and loan exhibitions to responsible educational institutions in the United States and abroad.

Thus the MAI-HF's policies regarding its collections bear directly on its continuing ability to influence and support both the learned world through research and educational activities, and the lay community through education. Interests of American Indian and Eskimo communities must be given particular emphasis.

Only those specimens that will enhance the scientific, cultural, or educational value of the MAI-HF collections and that can be properly conserved by the MAI-HF will be accessioned.

It is clear that MAI-HF cannot engage in indiscriminate acquisition. Physical space limitations alone make comprehensive collection impossible. The financial aspects of fulfilling the continuing purposes of MAI-HF to preserve, maintain, and interpret artifacts



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relating to American Indian life-ways impose restrictions on accession capabilities. Consequently, the curators and Director must maintain a schedule of priorities for new accessions. For similar reasons policies are established covering deaccession and disposal of specimens and/or collections that may no longer be appropriate or necessary for the areas of interest of the MAI-HF.

## II. RESPONSIBILITIES

The primary responsibility for the daily application of the standards here set out lies with the staff of the museum. Trustees cannot assume essentially staff responsibilities for judgments of the desirability of obtaining individual objects. The staff member best suited by training and knowledge of the field represented by the object is responsible for making material judgments and recommendations.

It shall be the responsibility of the curators and the Director of MAI-HF to propose guidelines establishing the areas of coverage and standards of documentation for the collections, and to detail accession and deaccession procedures relating to the collections. These guidelines shall be consonant with the policies stated in this document.

## III. POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR ACCESSIONS

### A. Priorities for Accessions

#### *General Considerations:*

We cannot afford to house permanently specimens that lack scientific, historical, or artistic value. The MAI-HF must be able to provide storage, protection, and preservation under the conditions that insure availability for study and exhibition. To be acceptable for the collections of the MAI-HF objects must, therefore, meet the following conditions:

1. *Relevance:* Must be in the field represented by the MAI-HF: the anthropology and history of the Indians of North, Central, and South America, including the adjacent islands, and of the Eskimos. Relevant items include (a) objects made by such peoples; (b) objects of other origins known to have been used by or associated with such peoples; (c) natural historical mat-

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erials documenting the cultures or biology of these peoples; (d) paintings, drawings, sculpture, photographs, manuscripts, and printed materials of non-Indian origin but providing evidence on Native cultures or history.

### 2. *Documentation:*

*Archeological:* preferably materials from scientifically controlled and recorded excavations.

*Ethnological:* preferably field collected and documented specimens, identified as to cultural provenience, function, and period.

### 3. *Special Considerations:*

Specimens with less than complete data, but having artistic or scientific merit may be accessioned if the curators are reasonably certain their origin, context, and history can be established through scholarly research.

It is important for both the research and exhibition functions of the MAI-HF to document changes and developments in Native American arts and technology, so collecting of recent and current work should be emphasized.

## **B. Laws Concerning Specimen Acquisition**

Specimens shall be acquired only when the MAI-HF has determined to the best of its ability that they have been collected, exported, and imported in full compliance with the laws and regulations of the country or countries of origin, of the federal government of the United States, and of individual states within the United States.

## **C. Ethics and Specimen Acquisition**

The MAI-HF shall not acquire archeological or ethnographic specimens which it has reason to believe have been unethically collected or unethically alienated from their society of origin (even when not in contravention of the relevant formal laws).

## **D. Standards of Specimen Documentation**

The Director is charged with the responsibility of assuring that the curatorial staff keeps adequate and up-to-date records on accessions and relates existing field documentation to the catalogs, or seeks to recover it.

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### **E. Conditions of Acceptance**

Title to all objects must be free and clear. Except as noted below, MAI-HF cannot accept specimens on which restrictions are placed, which would prevent effective research examination, normal exhibition use, loan, or disposal in accordance with this document. MAI-HF also cannot accept specimens on conditions which would require that they be placed on permanent or long term exhibition, or that the collection of which they form a part should be kept together permanently and/or displayed only as a discrete collection. Exceptions to this rule may be made for particularly rare or well documented items, where the restrictions imposed by the donor are in accord with scientific and scholarly needs, e.g. that groups of objects never be deaccessioned except to another public institution with deaccession policies comparable to those set forth herein.

All acquisitions, other than field collections made by Museum staff under pre-arranged conditions, require approval of the Trustees before transfer to MAI-HF. The Trustees will act only under receipt of written recommendations from the staff, accompanied by an opportunity to examine all available documentation and, where possible, an opportunity to view the objects themselves.

### **F. Evaluation of Accessions and Other Materials**

No employee of MAI-HF shall give appraisals for any purpose, including establishing the tax-deductible value of gifts offered to MAI-HF, nor shall he or she identify or otherwise authenticate for persons or agencies cultural artifacts under circumstances that could encourage or benefit illegal, unethical, or irresponsible traffic in such materials, or when there is reason to believe such identifications will be used primarily for commercial purposes. Identification and authentication (but not appraisals) may be given for scientific or educational purposes or in compliance with the legitimate requests or governmental bodies or their agents.

### **G. Other Uses**

Items may occasionally be accessioned that are recognized as inappropriate for permanent incorporation into the collections, if and only if they form part of an offering which also includes items suitable for permanent incorporation. If such inappropriate items are accepted, the donor must have attached no conditions to their

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acceptance. When they are received, and accepted by the Trustees, they will not be cataloged but adequate accession papers will be prepared that list and identify the items and include any information as to their histories that is available from the donor or seller. Such items will be kept for eventual disposal only to other public institutions, either through gift, or exchange, or sale. Such eventual disposition must be approved by the Trustees, and must conform to the policies on deaccessioning herein set forth.

### **H. Museum Shop**

The Shop of the MAI-HF is not an agent for obtaining additions to the collections. Nothing purchased or otherwise acquired by the Shop shall be accessioned.

### **I. Accession Records**

The MAI-HF staff shall prepare and preserve accession records for all objects acquired, including instruments of conveyance signed by the donor; adequate description of all objects involved in an accession; and as complete and adequate documentation of each object received and its history as can be obtained from the donor. Accession papers should include much documentation on the individual pieces that is not entered in the catalog.

### **J. Personal Collections**

The Director and staff members shall not make or expand or revise personal collections in any subject area represented in the MAI-HF collections, and must otherwise avoid even the appearance of competing privately with any function of MAI-HF.

## **IV. POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR DEACCESSION**

### **A. Introduction**

The MAI-HF acts as custodian of materials for the broader benefits of society. This may require permanent removal of specimens from MAI-HF and may rarely involve even physical discard or destruction of specimens. Nevertheless, nothing will be deaccessioned knowingly to any private individual nor any commercial dealer. Transfers will only be made to cultural, scientific, or educational institutions with deaccession policies comparable to those of MAI-HF.

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All of the provisions for deaccession shall be consistent with the legal and ethical constraints mentioned above (III.B and III.C).

Deaccession of specimens shall be recommended by the appropriate curator and the Director, and requires the subsequent approval of the Trustees.

### B. Specimen Transfer

1. *Gifts:* Gifts of specimens to an appropriate scientific, educational, or cultural institution may be deemed to be in the best interests of MAI-HF and society, especially when scholarly research on such items is best conducted at an institution other than MAI-HF.
2. *Exchanges:* The formal reciprocal transfer of specimens between two or more institutions often serves to advance research, education, or exhibition programs. Such exchanges may increase the probability of preserving materials for future societal benefit. Appropriate exchanges are more in keeping with the purposes of MAI-HF than transfer through sales.
3. *Sales:* No artifact shall be sold by MAI-HF except in conformity with the procedures herein described. If the curatorial staff decides that certain specimens or collections are no longer needed for the research and exhibition programs of the MAI-HF and the Trustees approve, then these specimens may be sold, subject to the following guidelines.
  - a. *Goal of sales:* Recognizing our responsibility for preserving the American Indian heritage, the Director, as advised by the curator(s), is authorized to complete arrangements for the sale to the bidder who appears most likely to provide the highest and most stable degree of care and make the most appropriate research, educational, or exhibition use of the material(s). Such arrangements require Board approval.
  - b. *Ethics of sale:* There shall be no sales of MAI-HF materials to staff members, the Board of Trustees, or their representatives, or to any private individuals, or to commercial concerns. Sales will be made only to institutions with standards of preservation and

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research and educational use comparable to those of MAI-HF.

- c. *Method of sales:* Sales shall be as public and as widely announced as possible.
- d. *Application of proceeds:* All funds received from the sale of specimens or collections, net of selling costs, shall be allocated to the capital of the MAI-HF, unless otherwise legally authorized.
- e. *Museum Shop:* No specimen donated to the collections, no cataloged specimen, and no item acquired under the provisions of Section III.G, shall be sold by the Museum Shop.

### C. Records on Specimen Disposal

A permanent record of all objects deaccessioned shall be made which will include:

- (1) Conditions and date of transaction;
- (2) Name and location of museum or institution to which the object is transferred;
- (3) Photograph, description, and measurement of each object covered by the deaccession action;
- (4) Marking of catalog to indicate the date and disposition of object, the authority for the action, and reference to file containing record or transaction.

## V. LOAN POLICY

The MAI-HF will lend artifacts and other materials from its collections for exhibit or research purposes to any corporation or institution formed or carried on for educational or scientific purposes, which will provide adequate care and security for the material. No loans will be made directly to individuals. Loans will be made only on the recommendation of the appropriate curator to the Director and with the approval of the Board of Trustees.

A. The following criteria shall govern the availability of material for any loan:

- 1. Borrowing agency must be a bona fide scientific and/or educational institution.
- 2. Objects shall not be removed from exhibition at this museum for temporary exhibition elsewhere.

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3. Objects shall not be loaned if, in the opinion of the curator or Director, in consultation with the Conservator, they are of such importance, rarity, and/or fragility that they must not be exposed to any danger or loss by removal from the museum.

**B.** All loans shall be subject to the following regulations, and no loans shall be made where these rules are not adhered to:

1. Borrower must insure the objects to the full amount specified by MAI-HF, door to door, with the best available coverage.
2. Borrower must arrange and pay for shipping in both directions, by methods approved by MAI-HF.
3. Material placed on public exhibition must be in locked or otherwise adequate secure cases, or when large objects are involved, so displayed as to provide maximum security.
4. Only adequate trained personnel shall be permitted to handle, move, or pack material.
5. The borrower shall exercise care at all times to ensure safe handling and keeping of material. As much care must be taken in dismantling exhibits in which these materials appear as in installing them.
6. No material may be altered, embellished, modified, or dismantled in any way. No pins, nails, or other supports may be used that leave any marks or evidence on the objects.
7. Borrowed material may not be used for any commercial purpose whatever without specific permission in writing from MAI-HF.
8. No objects may be re-loaned by a borrower without permission of MAI-HF.
9. Packing for return shipping must be in the same manner as, equivalent to, or better than the original packing.
10. Borrower may be required to pay for packing at MAI-HF by methods and personnel chosen or approved by MAI-HF.
11. MAI-HF may require that loans be accompanied by an MAI-HF staff member both outgoing and incoming, and that unpacking, mounting, dismounting, and re-

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packing be done under supervision of a staff member of MAI-HF, at borrower's expense.

12. MAI-HF reserves the right to ask a loan fee roughly commensurate with the cost to MAI-HF of preparing and providing materials from its collections for the loan. In each such case the fee shall be part of the loan agreement.

C. Incoming loans shall be accepted only for purposes of exhibition or current research at MAI-HF. No indefinite or long term loans shall henceforth be accepted. Rare exceptions to this rule may be authorized by the Trustees, on recommendation by the staff, in the case of extremely important pieces or collections. MAI-HF cannot normally store materials belonging to others that are not required for exhibition or on-going research. Sections III.B and III.C above, regarding legal and ethical acquisition policies, shall be applied to all incoming loans.

D. Appropriate loan forms shall prescribe the procedure for outgoing and incoming loans. A complete record of loan transactions shall be maintained by the Registrar of MAI-HF.

E. Any modification of these loan criteria may be made only by action of the Board of Trustees of MAI-HF.

## VI. ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS AND RECORDS

A. All specimen collections of MAI-HF shall be accessible for legitimate research and study by all responsible investigators, subject to procedures necessary to safeguard the specimens and to restrictions required by limitations of normal opening hours, of exhibition requirements, or available study space and facilities, and of the MAI-HF staff time necessary to protect the collections and to guide investigators as to their locations and documentation.

B. All catalog, accession, and archival records which are the property of the MAI-HF, shall be treated as public information. No restrictions shall be placed on access to them, save the following:

1. Time, space, protection, and staff assistance limitations as in VI.A. above shall be imposed.



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2. Unpublished maps and other records regarding the location of surviving archeological sites that have been incompletely excavated shall be restricted, with access subject to approval by the Board of Trustees acting on the recommendation of the relevant curator(s).
3. Requests for anonymity by donors will be honored, but only if this does not obscure the provenience of specimens.
4. Authors of manuscripts, field notes, translations, and other research records which are the results of their own creative efforts may restrict public access during their own lifetimes, except that archeological manuscripts may not be restricted for more than ten years after the completion of excavations. No one shall otherwise be denied access to archival materials simply because another individual is working with these materials.
5. Individuals requesting access to acquisition records must state in writing the purpose of their inquiries. Access shall be limited to legitimate scholarly and legal inquiry. The staff is under no obligation to facilitate random searches that, in their judgment, may be for purposes of monetary gain.
6. Subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees in each case, archival materials may be accepted with restrictions on access placed by the donor or by the MAI-HF archivist, when such restrictions are necessary to protect individuals or communities from harm or distress that might be caused by public disclosure of the contents of the documents. All such restrictions must also conform to accepted general standards for public archives and must include reasonable termination dates.
7. Costs of reproducing documentary materials and photographs may be charged to applicants. No distinctions in such charges shall be made on the basis of the value or rarity of the original materials. Methods of reproduction may be limited if necessary to protect the originals from possible damage.

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8. Royalties or reproduction fees may be charged where deemed appropriate by the Board of Trustees.
9. Except as specified above and except as necessary to maintain the MAI-HF's property rights, the MAI-HF shall not restrict publication of its materials for any non-commercial scholarly or educational purposes. Reasonable conditions, including those related to copyright and royalties, may be imposed as to integral reproduction and as to credit to the MAI-HF as source.

## VII. PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

This statement of collections policies shall be published in *Indian Notes*, the official journal of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation. Additional copies of this statement will be printed, and will be furnished to all Trustees and members of the MAI-HF staff, as well as to the American Association of Museums, to the press, and to other museums, and upon request to present and potential future donors to MAI-HF.

Any substantive amendments to these procedures shall be published in *Indian Notes*, and offered for publication to the New York City press and to suitable professional anthropological and museum news sources.

This statement of collections policies was approved by the Board of Trustees of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation at its regular meeting of June 29, 1977.



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